

associations previously mentioned, and who initiated the students into their own mysteries, thus accounting for the coincidences already pointed out, many are contented to believe that in the members of these we have the ancestors of that body of men more immediately under consideration, the Free-Masons of the middle ages. In Constantinople, as we know, a vast change was effected in architecture. Unfettered by the restraints which, at Rome, paganism and want of space had put upon them, the Christian architects determined upon an entire change of forms in their religious edifices, and the cross of equal sides, surmounted at the junction by a majestic cupola borne on arches, became the most striking characteristic of their style. In Constantinople, the sciences flourished for some time, in a greater degree than elsewhere: her men of learning were sought by Europeans as well as Asiatic nations, and her architecture was copied on all sides. Many of its characteristic features came even beyond the Alps, and were taken up by the Lombards; so much so, indeed, that Hope declares, that when, upon entering the ancient city of Cologne, he saw the east end of the Apostle's Church, he almost thought himself again at Constantinople. (*Hist. of Architecture*.) Its minutest details may be found in nearly all the various states of Italy.

Let us now turn for a brief space to England, where, according to the chroniclers, freemasons were early to be found. One writer has ventured the opinion that the Druids had a somewhat similar association, using like symbols, and practising architecture, into which they had been initiated by disciples of Pythagoras: and Preston, in his *Illustrations of Masonry* (though it appears, from his enthusiasm on the subject, he might easily have been deceived himself, even if not desirous to deceive others), mentions an old M.S., which said that St. Alban, who was beheaded A.D. 303, 'loved masons well, and cherished them much;' and that he used his influence to obtain a charter from the king enabling them to hold an assembly. Of these, and many other assertions, we have no proof; the authentic records, in most cases, having been destroyed. Benedict Biscop, founder of the Abbey of Weremouth, several times journeyed to Rome at the end of the seventh century to persuade artificers to come to England; but I find nothing to identify these workmen with the fraternity under consideration.

Alfred, so truly termed the Great, among other admirable endeavours to ameliorate the condition of his people (endeavours which, had the people been sufficiently advanced to co-operate with him, would have placed England a hundred years forward on her progress towards civilisation), strove to improve the domestic architecture of the country. At that time use was made of hardly anything for building but timber; a house of stone being regarded as a singularity: Alfred, however, invited the most noted architects from foreign countries to repair to Britain, with workmen eminent in the arts, and raised his palaces of stone and brick; an example which, by degrees, was followed by the nobility. (*Rapin's Hist. of England*.) At the commencement of this same century, Charlemagne, in like manner, on the Continent, had summoned men of all nations to build his celebrated church at Aix la Chapelle; after which events the existence of the fraternity of free-masons, under that title, is no longer doubtful; and the results of that existence are seen in a multiplicity of splendid structures, erected with amazing rapidity, and displaying the origin, progress, and perfection of an entirely new and exquisite style of architecture, viz., the Pointed. It is, most probably, from the strict secrecy under which all their proceedings were conducted, that so much doubt exists respecting the first introduction of this style. It appears clear, however, that, although the Pointed style appeared nearly simultaneously in Germany, France, and England, it is in the first of these three, viz., in Germany, that we must look for the earliest examples. This, however, is not a subject now to be entered upon.

In the states of Lombardy, as we know,

commerce, the offspring of industry, first gradually threw off the weight under which prosperity had been pressed to the earth by anarchy and barbarism since the overthrow of the Roman empire; and architecture and masonry, with the other sciences and arts, were again studied. This being the case, and the Lombardians, having before them the experience, and among them some of the descendants, of the modern Greek or Constantinopolitan school, which, as we have seen, had attained a certain degree of perfection under the fostering hand of Constantine and his successors, they soon became, as a natural consequence, not only the merchants of the world, but its builders; being eagerly sought for, when their own market was overstocked and they appeared disposed to travel in search of employment, by all the potentates of adjoining nations, who were at that time universally employed in raising religious edifices.

Wherever and whenever a missionary was despatched from the Pope to preach the Christian doctrine (and these were every day departing), to that place speedily resorted a band of these wandering artisans, under the special direction of the most expert craftsmen among them, whom they denominated the *Master*, to raise a fitting temple to the Deity. So numerous, however, were the demands for their services, that their numbers were found to be inadequate to the purposes of religion; and the Church of Rome, which must fully have felt how important a part of its machinery they at that time were, saw that some measures were necessary in order to swell their ranks, and protect them in the undisturbed exercise of their duties. Bulls, it is said, were accordingly issued endowing them with various rights and immunities: exemption was granted them from the laws of all local authorities; and those who opposed or interfered with their purpose were loudly threatened with excommunication. This proceeding speedily had the desired effect: Greek, Flemish, Italian, and German artists joined the main body, and were initiated into their mysteries; and, some have supposed, from this exemption from all local enactments, and the right to roam from place to place as they might feel inclined, or their interest lead them, they entitled themselves Freemasons.

That the Pope did really confer upon them these privileges has been questioned, and with some reason; for it appears that, upon searching the Vatican for the purpose of discovering the bulls stated to have been published, none were to be found: the many and clearly apparent reasons, however, which should have induced the Pope so to do; the constant reiteration of the circumstance by the chroniclers of the craft; and the fact that they did so quietly and independently pursue their labours in various countries, and in no very settled times, strongly induce me to put confidence in the assertion. Again, although not wholly in point, we find it recorded in Dodsworth's *Account of Salisbury*, as quoted by Britton, that, even in later times (1244), the Archbishop of Canterbury granted an indulgence of forty days to such as aided the new and wonderful structure of the Church of Sarum; which, the proclamation went on to say, could not be completed with the same grandeur without the assistance of the faithful.

This quotation may serve in some degree to explain to us the means which were used, builders being now provided, to raise sufficient sums for the construction of the magnificent edifices left for our admiration.

The Church of Rome has ever perceived the more speedy influence that is to be gained over men by appealing to their senses than to their reason; and the continual use made in her rites of striking and mystic ceremonies clearly shows how fully and systematically she has acted upon this knowledge. A sublime and lofty structure, then, dimly though richly lighted through glass of many colours, by which was cast an artificial glow on the magnificent paintings, sculptured monuments, and gilded decorations with which its interior teemed, was found to be no trifling adjunct in the process; and the whole power of the

Church was employed, as I have already said, in erecting such edifices, and inciting a spirit to 'go and do likewise' throughout the world. Bulls were published dispensing with a portion of all penances for sin to those who contributed to raise a church; and eloquent monks were despatched all over the world to inflame the ardour of the pious, and persuade or frighten, as the case might be, those who yet remained undecided.

Great indeed were the results: the land was as one workshop, and a man feared he had lived in vain had he not contributed to erect or adorn a religious house. (*William of Malmesbury*.) So profusely generous, indeed, were the grants made alike by prince, peer, and peasant, that it has been shown, to speak of England alone, that, at the death of Edward the Confessor, more than one-third of all the land was in possession of the clergy, exempt from all taxes, and, for the most part, even from military service. (*Henry's Hist. of Great Britain*.)

The freemasons, as we have seen, were the instruments employed to effect these purposes of the Church; and nobly they fulfilled their duty. Passing their earlier works in Lombardy and Germany, in which are to be discovered the germ of the Pointed style and its first development, I would direct attention to the cathedrals of Strasburg, Friburg, Cologne, Antwerp, St. Ouen in Normandy, and that *orbis miraculum*, as Leland calls it, Henry the Seventh's Chapel in England. To mention all the works of the freemasons were to speak of nearly all the edifices constructed during several centuries of that period, and would fill a volume; but the above may serve for instances of their wondrous genius as designers, and of their mathematical skill as constructors; astonishing us alike by the boldness of the outline and the grandeur of the masses, as by the lightness of the parts and the elegance of the execution.

In England, although I do not find that any additional privileges were extended to them by special enactment, few buildings were erected during the twelfth and the three following centuries without the assistance of members of the craft: in fact, the requisite skill appears to the last to have been confined to them; and some idea may be formed of their numbers, when we see that, during the thirteenth century, no less than ten cathedrals were in progress simultaneously. (*Dibdin's Tour*.)

Having thus briefly spoken of the origin and object of the fraternity of freemasons; traced, in some degree, their progress; and mentioned the results of their labours, I shall next attempt to bring together some few points of information regarding their internal government. As a consequence naturally resulting from the mystery with which they enshrouded all their proceedings, the authorities on this head are very few: collecting and collating, however, all that can be found, it would appear that a regular system of science, handed down to them from early times, and added to by almost each possessor, was taught in their lodges; and that of this system geometry (considered by them the first and noblest of the sciences) was the basis. The strictest morality was inculcated at their meetings; and the ancient charges by which they were governed display an uprightness of conduct much to be admired. 'Let no master,' says one, 'take on him no Lord's works, nor any other man's, unless he know himself well able to perform that work, so that the craft have no slander; a caution seen by no means to be disregarded, when we find in Dugdale and in Rymer the freemason stipulating in his contracts, 'to yield up his body to prison at my Lord's will' in case of non-performance. Another enjoins, not to supersede a brother mason, or to work for less than the established rate; and a third impresses the necessity of humility of behaviour and general kindness to all men.

When a band departed on an undertaking, a charge provided that the most expert craftsman should be appointed *master of the works*; under whom, when they reached their destination, every tenth man was appointed warden over his nine fellows: a camp near the spot was erected, and a lodge built in which to hold